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**THE MEDIATING EFFECTS OF PRE- and POST-ASSIGNMENT
ACTIVITIES ON THE QUALITY OF WORK LIFE OF EXPATRIATES:
EVIDENCE FOR MANAGERS IN THE P.R.C.**

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**The Mediating Effects of Pre- and Post-Assignment Activities
on the Quality of Work Life of Expatriates:
Evidence for Managers in the P.R.C.**

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The Mediating Effects of Pre- and Post-Assignment Activities on the Quality of Work Life of Expatriates: Evidence for Managers in the P.R.C.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates how two managerial interventions, pre-assignment training and post-assignment support, mediate the relationship between a set of personal & job characteristics and a broad measure of foreign assignment success, quality of work life (QWL). To accomplish this, we studied 199 expatriates posted from the Republic of China (Taiwan) to the People's Republic of China (PRC), a host country with a similar language, race, and cultural background. Using this setting, we were better able to isolate the mediating effects of these human resource interventions on the assignee's adjustment and success. In the end, it appears that some of the personal (locus of control) and job characteristics (work roles) are related to QWL. In addition, pre-assignment training and post-assignment support, which were observed to mediate the relationships between these factors and QWL, appear to ameliorate the adverse consequences attributable to expatriates muddled work roles and perceptions of powerlessness.

INTRODUCTION

When a multinational begins internationalizing, by establishing a new foothold or strengthening its position in a foreign country, one of the most important issues it faces is to recruit, select, assign, and prepare the right employees to protect and grow its investment (Black & Mendenhall, 1991). As has been documented, however, not every expatriate adapts to their new environment and performs as well as the company expected. For every employee or manager, there may be a period of time necessary for him or her to learn about and assimilate to their new assignment (Pinder & Schroeder, 1987) not to mention the host country's environment and culture before his or her productivity is satisfactory (Black & Mendenhall, 1991).

Indeed, previous studies indicate there is rather a high rate of people who do not "successfully" make this transition and return early (see for example, Baker & Ivancevich, 1971; Lanier, 1979; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Misa & Fabricatore, 1979; Torbion, 1982; Tung, 1982; 1988; Zeira & Banai, 1987). As has been documented, these failures often result in sizable losses for the company; which are evident in a variety of ways (Harris, 1979). For instance, the inability of expatriates to adjust may result in tangible costs, for example managerial nonperformance, lost productivity, strained client relationships, and operational inefficiencies, and other less readily apparent, but substantial, costs, such as the manager's loss of self-esteem and self-confidence and possibly a new, less favorable assessment of the expatriates' abilities (Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985). Given the consequences of expatriate assignments, it is apparent why there is a need to determine and better understand factors that influence success and failure in the foreign assignment.

The expatriate group we chose for our study of two of these mediating effects, pre-assignment training and post-assignment support, on quality of work life were Taiwanese expatriates living and working in the People's Republic of China. They were primarily located in the special economic zones near the coast and China's major urban centers. We chose these subjects to in effect, but by no means perfectly, control for language, race, and cultural background.

By way of background, growing product markets coupled with low-cost labor in the People's Republic of China have generated large and increasing investments from other countries in the last decade. Indeed, in recent years, many MNCs have expanded their operations in the People's Republic of China (P.R.C.). Among all the foreign investors, there are many who argue that Taiwan's success is attributable to the fact that it has a similar cultural background, traditional value system, and language as the People's Republic of China (Ku, 1993).

Regardless of the aforementioned alleged advantages held by Taiwanese companies, Taiwanese MNCs operating in the People's Republic of China still experience a high rate of assignee failure if returning early is the operative measure used (Ku, 1993). As is often the case in the expatriate selection process, no matter what the home country of the MNC, employees performing well in the home country are usually the preferred candidates for foreign assignments. However, the research shows that even they are not necessarily successful (Tung, 1981).

To date, most of the existing research has explored very simple hypotheses testing the direct relationships between independent variables (such as job factors) and dependent variables (like expatriate adjustment). Based on a somewhat different research strategy, the present study looks at how two managerial interventions, pre-assignment training and post-assignment support activities, mediate the relationship between expatriates' job and individual characteristics and their success, defined more broadly than returning early as quality of work life. In doing so, by borrowing from the notion of, and research, on quality of work life (for instance, Levine, Taylor, & Davis, 1984), we recast and broaden the general concept of "expatriate adjustment" to arrive at a more comprehensive understanding about expatriate failure and success based on this multidimensional construct.

Specifically, using a set of foreign assignees in a context with virtually the same language, race, and cultural background, we seek to better define the direct relationships between these explanatory variables (age, family, work roles, personality, and several demographic factors) and the expatriate's quality of work life (on three dimensions: *the work, family & daily life*, and *the environment*).

QUALITY OF WORK LIFE OF EXPATRIATES

In the broadest sense, quality of work life encompasses more than one limited dimension that is specifically related to a job's duties and tasks. The work environment (Stein, 1983; Levine, 1983) and even the broader context in which the work takes place (Salancik & Pfeffer, 1978) are also important. Indeed, factors related to the cognitions and attitudes of expatriates toward the contextual environments in which they live and work have attracted the attention of those researchers examining assignee adjustment. In this study, instead of using the idea of general adjustment (Black & Gregersen, 1991), we offer an alternative way of thinking about this issue by expanding and redefining expatriate adjustment in terms of quality of work life. Doing so enables us to measure the degree of adjustment and to ascertain the normative implications of adjustment for foreign assignees.

In recent years, many studies have addressed the impact of quality of work of life on human resource outcomes, but almost exclusively in domestic settings (Havlovic, 1991). Quality of work life is not a univariate concept, however. Indeed, it has been conceptualized in many ways (Levine, Taylor, & Davis, 1984). Multifaceted, like traditional adjustment theory (Feldman & Thompson, 1993; Black, 1988; Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992), the idea of quality of work life has been broadly operationalized as satisfaction with one's job and its contexts. Therefore, a number of facets, ranging from internal factors to external factors (and even, non-job related factors) have been explored (Stein, 1983; Levine, 1983; Levine, Taylor, & Davis, 1984; Shamir & Salomon, 1985; Efraty & Sirgy, 1990). To understand more clearly the determinants of expatriate adjustment and thereby increase the success of the foreign assignment, however, it is first necessary to determine the dimensions of quality of work life. In fact, a number of studies have addressed this issue, especially from the viewpoint of assignment adjustment theory. A review of foreign adjustment theory (Black & Stephens, 1989; Feldman & Thompson, 1993; Black, 1988; Black, Gregersen, & Mendenhall, 1992) indicates that there are three critical facets that have been mentioned, or implied, as indicators of quality of work life for the foreign assignee: *the work, family & daily life*, and *the environment*.

Quality of Work Life -- *the work*.

Of course, when examining the notion of quality of work life, the most obvious dimension is the work itself. In previous studies, many researchers have focused on the expatriate's adjustment to the new assignment (Brett, 1980; 1984; Black & Stephens, 1989; Gregersen & Black, 1990). Indeed, previous research shows that the level of quality of work life--*the job* is related to success in international assignments (Naumann, 1993).

For expatriate managers in the PRC, QWL--*the work* is likely to be affected by long-standing traditions regarding the roles of and relationships between the state, the enterprise, managers, and employees. For example, Von Glinow and Teagarden (1988) point out that there are profound differences between western influenced HR systems and Chinese HR systems, especially with respect to their underlying assumptions about people, performance, and rewards. These authors, for instance, argue that motivating Chinese employees is difficult, and dismissing them is virtually impossible. Undoubtedly, policies and practices such as these will affect expatriates' assessments of QWL.

Job tasks, relationships with peers, supervisors, and subordinates have also been considered when assessing quality of work life (Stein, 1983; Levine, 1983; Levine, Taylor, & Davis, 1984). Accordingly, this study defines and operationalizes quality of work life--*the work* as: satisfaction with the job and it's related factors.

Quality of Work Life -- *family & daily life*.

The second dimension we focus on is *family & daily life*. As has been well documented, one of the most important issues in the foreign assignment is the adjustment of the assignee's spouse and family (Feldman, 1991). Numerous studies have suggested that the inability of the expatriate's family to adjust and the expatriate's difficulties with daily life decrease their satisfaction (Feldman & Thompson, 1993; Naumann, 1993; Black & Stephens, 1989; Harvey, 1983; Brett & Werbel, 1980). Moreover, the inability of the expatriate's family to adjust and cope is often cited as the biggest reason for expatriate failure, as failure is currently measured (Hays, 1971; Tung, 1981, 1982).

As Tung (1986) alludes to, these family complications and challenges are likely to be everthemore pronounced for expatriates dispatched to the PRC. Governmental, educational, religious, and lifestyle differences are but a few factors that are likely to affect QWL--*family and daily life*.

Quality of Work Life -- *the environment*.

The third critical dimension of interest is quality of work life--*the environment*. According to adjustment theory, another facet of adjustment involves the expatriate's adjustment to their new environment, which, for lack of a better term, has often been defined as the host country's culture (Feldman & Tompson, 1993; Church, 1982; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Stenning, 1979; Black, Gregersen & Mendenhall, 1992).

One eminent environmental factor that has been noted by Beamish (1993) is the increased and more complex role that government business partners have in nearly every joint venture or alliance in the PRC. As he observes (p. 43), there are sharp differences between PRC partners and foreign companies concerning "profit motivations, speed of decision making, and desire for employment efficiency"; and these differences are certain to affect expatriates' QWL--*the environment* judgments.

When expatriates move to a foreign country, be it the PRC or another, all too often they do not know how to build and maintain relationships with government authorities, business partners, or, even, merchants, in the context of the host country (Black & Mendenhall, 1991; Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1962; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Torbion, 1982). When this is the case, expatriates are likely to become dissatisfied with their circumstances. Consequently, their quality of working life--*the environment* which may, in turn, adversely affect their productivity.

In sum, previous studies of foreign assignment adjustment have relied on many different, sometimes piecemeal, conceptualizations and operationalizations. Therefore, it is difficult to compare most of these studies with one another. Hence, this makes summarizing the previous prescriptions and results somewhat difficult. It is evident, however, that the relationships between job and individual characteristics, pre- and post-assignment managerial interventions, and quality

of work life have not been sufficiently studied. Until now, expatriate adjustment has been thought of primarily as a unidimensional construct. This has been the case even though several researchers have maintained that adjustment is a multidimensional phenomenon (Black, 1988; Black & Stephens, 1989). Borrowing from previous empirical research on the expatriate adjustment phenomenon, the present study develops and empirically examines a more comprehensive, multidimensional measure of adjustment--QWL.

The overarching research framework for this study appears in Figure 1, where a conceptual model of the variables in this study appears. The model posits that two human resource management interventions will mediate the relationships between the independent variables (individual and job characteristics) and quality of work life. In accordance with the prescriptions offered by James and Brett (1984), we expect that any significant direct effects of independent variables will reduce to non-significance when the mediating variables, pre-assignment training and post-assignment support, are included in the model.

.....
 Insert Figure 1 about here

THE DETERMINANTS OF QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

A host of studies suggest that a few key demographic factors are the most important predictors of success or failure in a foreign assignment. The most frequently cited factors are age and marital, or family, status (Feldman, 1991; Feldman & Tompson, 1993).

Age

As Feldman (1991) proposes, middle-aged expatriates may be the ones who experience the most difficulty in foreign assignments. Relatively speaking, it is easier to assign young expatriates to foreign countries because they have fewer responsibilities, they are more motivated, and they are more tolerant. Alternatively, it has been posited that older expatriates may encounter more difficulties because of their family and other responsibilities (Feldman, 1991). Accordingly,

Hypothesis 1: There will be an inverse relationship between expatriate age and all three dimensions of quality of work life.

Family

As mentioned, family responsibilities also undoubtedly affect the adjustment of expatriates. To be sure, there is much research indicating that family factors influence the adjustment of expatriates like few others (Hays, 1971; Misa & Fabricatore, 1979; Torbion, 1982; Tung, 1981, 1982). More specifically, there is evidence that problems associated with spouse and family adjustment are often the primary reason for the assignment terminating early (Black & Stephens, 1989). Our hypothesis, therefore, is that,

Hypothesis 2: There will be an inverse relationship between expatriate's family responsibilities and all three dimensions of quality of work life.

Work Roles

To date, there has been little research focusing on role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload in the context of international assignments (Shenkar & Zeira, 1990). Despite a growing body of knowledge on these factors derived in a variety of settings, some suggest that these findings are not relevant or informative for international operations, especially foreign assignments (Adler, 1983).

By way of definition, think of role conflict as any situation where the priorities of one system conflict with the priorities of one or more other systems (Shenkar & Zeira, 1990). Of course, few would disagree with the assertion that managing in a foreign country is more complicated than in the home country. Given this, it is not at all difficult to imagine an expatriate experiencing role conflict. When expatriates experience conflicting messages and expectations, it will be more difficult for them to decide how to behave. Therefore, it seems as if the presence of high role conflict will make the expatriate's adjustment more difficult, and their quality of work life less desirable. Ethical dilemmas, like bribery and tax evasion, arising from cultural differences are particularly vivid examples of how this phenomenon may manifest itself in the foreign assignment.

Expatriates are also likely to experience role ambiguity. This is likely to occur because they lack knowledge regarding proper behaviors in their new cultural context (Rotter, 1966). The

literature suggests that as role ambiguity increases, individuals are not as well able to adopt appropriate behaviors, and make prudent decisions. The primary cause of role ambiguity is the presence of uncertainties in the environment. An expatriate's unfamiliarity with the environment only serves to compound already ambiguous situations.

Regarding the notion of role overload (Karasek, 1979), an expatriate may simply have too many demands placed upon them by too many different agents. Due to limitations in ability and resources (e.g., time, energy), expatriates may not be able to respond to and satisfy each person's demand. This may lead to role overloading, negative feelings, and unsuccessful transitions to and from tasks (Kahn, Wolf, Quinn, Snoek, & Rosenthal, 1964; Tung, 1982). For instance, it is not uncommon for expatriates in Asia to work all day and then continue communicating with their North American headquarters, where the work day is just starting, well into the night.

More generally, Beamish (1993), in a study of the characteristics of joint ventures in the PRC, argues that even managers who have had experience with joint ventures in other developing countries face five unique challenges (including an ever-present uncertainty about consummating any agreement and a high level of instability even after an agreement has been reached) when conducting business in the PRC. Undoubtedly, these destabilizing factors contribute to muddled work roles and changing priorities.

In summary, role conflict, role ambiguity, and role overload have the potential to adversely affect the adjustment of expatriates. Thus, we hypothesize that,

Hypothesis 3: Role ambiguity, role conflict, and role overload, will all be inversely related to all three dimensions of quality of work life.

Personality

Even though research on foreign assignments has a long history, there are still many shortcomings in this area. One of these shortcomings is the inattention to the effect that personality has on assignment success. Only a few researchers have empirically investigated how personality characteristics might help to predict who will be successful and who will fail (Black, 1990; Mendenhall & Oddou, 1985; Stenning, 1979).

In this study, we use the concept of locus of control (external/internal) as a definitive measure of personality (Rotter, 1966). Quite simply, this is the way that people view control and causation. For example, some individuals view their behaviors, and the outcomes they generate, as internally controlled, and thus believe they are in control. Others, however, feel that their behaviors, and the outcomes that emerge, are controlled by external sources. They believe that their lives are controlled by other people or forces in the environment, not themselves. Without question, when an individual perceives that he or she is in control of a situation, the outcome is likely to be quite different from the case where a person feels that external forces are in control. Indeed, there are numerous studies which have suggested that individuals who are external in their orientation tend to feel more alienated in their work setting and their environment, and they are less satisfied with their jobs (Organ & Greene, 1974; Mitchell, Pryer & Distefano, 1975; Rotter, 1966; Runyon, 1973; Wolfe, 1972). Thus,

Hypothesis 4: The greater one's external control orientation, the lesser will be all three dimensions of quality of work life.

THE ROLE OF MEDIATORS ON QUALITY OF WORK LIFE

Pre-Assignment Training

Gomez-Mejia and Balkin (1983) are among those who argue that managerial policies associated with a foreign assignment have a higher impact on the adjustment of expatriates than individual characteristics. One influential factor they identify is pre-assignment training. Indeed, they are among many who propose that proper training will substantially reduce the cultural shock of expatriates (Alder, 1986). Specifically, pre-assignment training and the provision of information on topics related to: the culture and environment of the host country, potential problems, and means for coping with expatriation adjustment, should serve to reduce expatriates' levels of uncertainty and apprehension and thereby increase the probability of success in the foreign adjustment. Accordingly,

Hypothesis 5: Pre-assignment training will mediate the strength of relationships between personal and job characteristics and all three dimensions of quality of work life.

Post-Assignment Support

Another managerial policy that should improve expatriates' quality of work life is two-way communication with the home country. In general, the higher the level of support, the greater will be the flow of information to and from the expatriate. In principle, this should help the expatriate to cope with and conquer the environment that he or she meets with. Therefore,

Hypothesis 6: Post-assignment support will mediate the strength of relationships between personal and job characteristics and all three dimensions of quality of work life.

DATA, MEASURES, AND METHODS

Data

The sample for this research was drawn from the Association of Taiwanese Business Managers in the People's Republic of China. Of the 300 questionnaires sent to Taiwanese managers posted to Taiwanese companies operating in the P.R.C., 213 were returned for a response rate of 71%; and 199 of the returned questionnaires were deemed usable. Therefore, the operative response rate was 66.3%. The respondents were male (100%) and tended to be married (82.3%). In 78.6% of the married cases, the expatriate's spouse also relocated to the P.R.C. In 20.9% of these cases, the expatriates' children also moved with them. The modal age of respondents was 36-40, and the modal time in current foreign assignment was 1-2 years.

Measures

The questionnaire used in this study was developed by integrating questions and scales created and used in previous research efforts that tap the individual and job characteristics, HR management interventions, and quality of work life constructs reviewed previously. The indicators we used have received strong support in the research literature and have exhibited internal and external validity.

Dependent Variables

Quality of Work Life. The measures of quality of work life were based on research by Black (1988), Black & Stephens (1989), Torbion (1982), Black (1990), and Naumann (1993). We attempted to define and measure the quality of work life more comprehensively than have the

previous studies. Since the 32 items we used to assess the quality of work life combined measures from a number of different studies, it was necessary to confirm their dimensionality empirically. To do so, we conducted principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation to assess convergence within and divergence between scales. This procedure produced three stable factors representing the quality of work life defined in terms of *the work, family & daily life*, and *the environment*. Each has an eigenvalue above 1.0 and together they account for 38% of variance in the data. Table 1 gives the items and factor loadings.

 Insert Table 1 about here

Explanatory Variables

Age. Age was measured by asking the expatriates place themselves in a range that was a function of their age on their last birthday.

Family. Family responsibility was measured by asking the expatriates to indicate the relative complexity of their family obligations as a function of their marital and parental status.

Work Roles. The role conflict, role overload, and role ambiguity questions were based on instruments and items developed, validated, and employed by Rizzo, House, & Lirtzman (1970), Black (1988), and Torbion (1982). In our study, the reliability (Cronbach alpha) for role conflict was 0.79, for role overload was 0.83, and for role ambiguity was 0.89.

Personality. To measure locus of control, we used the standard version of the Internal-External Scale (Rotter, 1966); and, as in the case of the previous studies (Runyon, 1973; Mitchell, Smyser, & Weed, 1975), the 3 education items were omitted. The reliability was 0.78 for this variable.

Mediating Variables

Pre-Assignment Training. An assessment of pre-assignment training was directly obtained from the expatriates. Expatriates were asked two questions measuring the quality and frequency of pre-assignment training programs provided by the company to prepare them for their

job assignment and their new environment before they left for their assignment. The reliability of this measure was .88.

Post-Assignment Support. The post-assignment support measure taps the amount of intraorganizational interaction the expatriate experienced after being assigned to People's Republic of China. These scales were developed and validated by Ku (1993). The instrument includes five items measuring the source (for example, through the media, headquarters personnel, and by way of formal reporting requirements) to and from the home company in Taiwan and frequency of information flows. The reliability of this measure of post-assignment support was 0.79.

Control Variables

Assignment Type. This is the type of assignment; whether the expatriate is the lone foreign assignee or the person is part of a management team of home country expatriates.

Assignment Tenure. This is a categorization reflecting the number of years the expatriate has been in their current position in China.

Methods

In accordance with the procedure for analyzing the effects of mediators suggested by Cohen & Cohen (1983), we performed multiple regression analysis to examine the relationships between quality of work life and the aforementioned independent variables (see, for example, Parasuraman, Greenhaus, Rabinowitz, Bedeian, & Mossholder, 1989). In the first step, the two control variables (type of assignment and assignment tenure) were regressed on each of the three dimensions of quality of work life. In the next step, the six explanatory were added (age, family, role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, and locus of control). In the last step, in order to isolate their individual effects, the two mediating variables (pre-assignment training and post-assignment support) were included one at a time. If the relationships between the dimensions of quality of work life and the independent variables are substantially changed or reduced to non significance through the addition of either of the two hypothesized mediators, we can conclude that the pre- and post-assignment variables play a mediating role in the relationship between individual and job characteristics and quality of work life.

RESULTS

Intercorrelations

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations and correlations for the variables in this study. As may be seen, not surprisingly, quality of work life--*the work* was inversely related to role conflict (-0.62), role ambiguity (-0.57), role overload (-0.60), and external control (-0.44), and positively related to post-assignment support (0.74), and pre-assignment training (0.69). Quality of work life--*the family & daily life* also demonstrated a very similar pattern of results with role conflict (-.40), role ambiguity (-.33), role overload (-.35), locus of control (-.26), post-assignment support (0.69), and pre-assignment training (0.41). Quality of work life--*the environment*, too, was negatively related with role conflict (-.48) and role overload (-.36), but it was positively related to role ambiguity (.45), locus of control (.32), and post-assignment support (0.65), and pre-assignment training (0.66). Note, too, that the mediators, post-assignment support and pre-assignment training, were negatively related to: role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, and external locus of control.

Insert Table 2 about here

Mediating Effects on Quality of Work Life

QWL--*the work*

Table 3 presents the results of the regression analysis predicting quality of work life--*the work*. First we controlled for the expatriate's type and time of assignment. After adding the independent variables, a positive (not inverse--as predicted by H₂) relationship between family responsibility and QWL--*the work* was detected. This was the only dimension of QWL where this occurred in the second stage. It is important to note that when either of the mediating variables were added, this coefficient was reduced to non significance). In addition, we found that three explanatory variables (role conflict (b= -.23, p<.01), role overload (b= -.22, p<.001), and external locus of control (b= -.14, p<.01)) had negative effects on quality of work life--*the work*. This finding provides some evidence for H₃ and H₄. In short, it appears that when expatriates

experience increased levels of role conflict and role overload, and they believe that circumstances are increasingly out of their control, quality of work life--*the work* declines.

After including the mediators, pre-assignment training and post-assignment support, both were shown to have a positive direct effect ($b = .53, p < .001$, $b = .52, p < .001$, respectively) on quality of work life--*the work*. As expected, the size and significance of the effects for the three independent variables were reduced substantially when either mediator was included; but given that they remained significantly different from zero, their direct effects cannot be ruled out. In other words, contrary to H_5 and H_6 , in this study, pre-assignment training and post-assignment support do not mediate the relations between role conflict, role overload, and external locus of control and *the work* dimensions of QWL.

Insert Table 3 about here

QWL--*family & daily life*

In Table 4, the results of the regression analysis predicting the quality of work life-- *family & daily life* may be found. After controlling for the type and time of assignment, role conflict ($b = -.16, p < .01$) and role ambiguity ($b = -.10, p < .05$) had significant, negative effects on this dimension of quality of work life providing additional evidence for H_3 and H_4 . In the next stage, both of the mediators, pre-assignment training and post-assignment support, had a positive effect ($b = .57, p < .001$, $b = .45, p < .001$, respectively) on quality of work life--*the family & daily life*.

When the mediators were added, the effects of the two independent variables were reduced to non significance. In the case of role conflict, pre-assignment training was observed to act as a mediator ($b = -.16, p < .01$ to $b = -.04, p > .05$). In the case of role ambiguity, both pre-assignment training and post-assignment support function as mediators ($b = -.10, p < .05$ to $b = -.05, p > .05$, in both cases). These results provide some evidence for H_5 and H_6 , which assert that pre-assignment training and post-assignment mediate the relationship between job characteristics and QWL-- *the family & daily life*.

Insert Table 4 about here

QWL--the environment

Table 5 presents the results for the regression analysis predicting the quality of work life--*the environment*. After controlling for the type and time of assignment, role conflict ($b = -.22$, $p < .05$) and role overload ($b = -.13$, $p < .05$) were observed to have moderately significant, negative effects on the quality of work life--*the environment*. As predicted, when role conflict and role overload increase, the expatriate's QWL--*the environment* lessens.

After including the mediators, pre-assignment training and post-assignment support, both were observed to have a positive direct effect ($b = .38$, $p < .01$, $b = .87$, $p < .001$, respectively) on quality of work life--*the environment*. In addition, as predicted, the effects of role conflict and role overload were reduced to non significance after these mediators were added. When either pre-assignment training or post-assignment support were included, role conflict was reduced to non significance ($b = -.22$, $p < .05$ to $b = -.14$, $p > .05$ and $b = -.22$, $p < .05$ to $b = -.09$, $p > .05$, respectively). As for role overload, its relationship to QWL--*the environment* was mediated only by post-assignment support ($b = -.13$, $p < .05$ to $b = .001$, $p > .05$). These results provide further evidence for H_5 and H_6 , which holds that pre-assignment training and post-assignment mediate the relationship between these job characteristics and QWL-- *the environment*.

 Insert Table 5 about here

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the important influence quality of work life has on managerial practices and its importance in the domestic HR research literature, its role for expatriates in international settings has generally been ignored. In this study, we find that a number of variables--which are usually regarded as the antecedents to quality of work life in the domestic setting--are also strongly related to expatriates' QWL in foreign assignments. Indeed, role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload, and locus of control seem to be important factors in the quality of work life evaluations made by expatriates.

In this study, somewhat surprisingly, the hypothesized relationships for family responsibilities H_1 and age H_2 were not detected. All else equal, older employees did not have lower levels of QWL than younger ones nor did expatriates with greater family responsibilities have lower levels of QWL than those with fewer family responsibilities. Of course, these two variables may be somewhat confounded with each other and, thus, may involve a more complex relationship than we were able to specify in this study. Accordingly, in future studies of these phenomena, researchers might want to utilize alternative measures and dimensionalities to test the roles of age, experience, and family responsibilities. For instance, it may be wise to know more about how well expatriates and their families are adjusted in their own domestic contexts, in addition to how well adjusted they are in their respective foreign environments.

Concerning the individual and job characteristics that were studied, our findings indicate that the most important factors influencing the quality of work life of expatriates are job characteristics. For each of the three dimensions of QWL, we found at least some direct effects for work roles. Therefore, H_3 is partially confirmed. Since this is the case, organizations might consider placing more emphasis on job design and reporting relationships in the context of foreign assignments. If work roles (role conflict, role ambiguity, role overload) are more thoroughly addressed in the formal job description, pre-assignment training and post-assignment support activities, quality of work life is likely to be improved. Considering this finding, it seems wise that companies allow for an overlap between the time one manager returns and another arrives in order to let the newcomer have the opportunity to learn the necessary skills to solve problems inherent to the foreign assignment. Furthermore, it also appears that the more post-assignment support expatriates receive, the greater will be their quality of work life. Obviously, support from the home company may still not insure that expatriates will be able to solve problems or not return early. It seems that the more often managers interact with their home country colleagues, the more likely it is that their quality of work life will improve.

Finally, for *family & daily life* and *the environment* we found that pre-assignment training and post-assignment support serve as mediators, as predicted. Although the mix was slightly

different, in half (4) of the cases (8) where direct effects were initially detected, they were reduced to non significance by either pre-assignment training or post-assignment support. In short, it appears that these two managerial interventions can help to eliminate the adverse effects that muddled work roles and perceptions of powerlessness have on QWL. Thus H₅ and H₆ were partially supported. Confirmation of these hypotheses was limited to these two dimensions only, for in the case of QWL--*the work*, it seems that the inverse relationships between role conflict, role overload, and external locus of control on QWL are so robust that they cannot be nullified by pre-assignment training or post-assignment support.

To recap, as has been the case for job satisfaction and job involvement (Naumann, 1993), insufficient attention has been given to the concept quality of work life in the international management context. Our study attempts to fill this void by extending the frameworks derived in previous domestically focused research to the international context. In addition, when researchers have investigated the outcomes of foreign assignments, they have traditionally focused on the adjustment of assignees. Neither, completing the assignment nor favorable adjustment, however, necessarily define a successful assignment. Conventional wisdom and a number of studies cited previously hold that QWL and job performance are positively related. Therefore, this study has more normative implications than the traditional assessments of adjustment that have been conducted to date.

Given the importance of quality of work life and the distinct probability that it is a precursor to expatriate failure, further studies on this topic appear to be in order. Moreover, recall that in previous studies, individual characteristics, like family status, have gained the attention of researchers and been offered as the most important factors related to success in a foreign assignment. The present study, however, suggests that work roles have a greater impact on assignee attitudes in the foreign assignment and that problems with these roles can be ameliorated through pre-assignment training and post-assignment support. Finally, given the enhanced, multiple dimensions of the dependent variable studied in this research design, it appears that we need to continue to examine to what degree demographic factors influence expatriate

adjustment and how they might be mediated by pre- and post-assignment managerial interventions.

Until now, several simplistic, but nevertheless important, relationships pertinent to foreign assignments have attracted most of the attention of researchers (such as the relationship between age and assignee adjustment). It is, however, essential that we continue to investigate new relationships between relevant and informative independent, mediating, and even moderating variables and expatriate success, broadly defined. Admittedly, the research presented here is still somewhat narrow in focus because we deal with only three categories of independent variables. In the end, extending this framework to an international context and generating these findings, it appears there is little doubt that it will be possible to obtain an increasingly better understanding of the attitudes, behaviors, and outcomes of expatriates by applying theories and confirming conclusions derived in domestic contexts in international ones as well.

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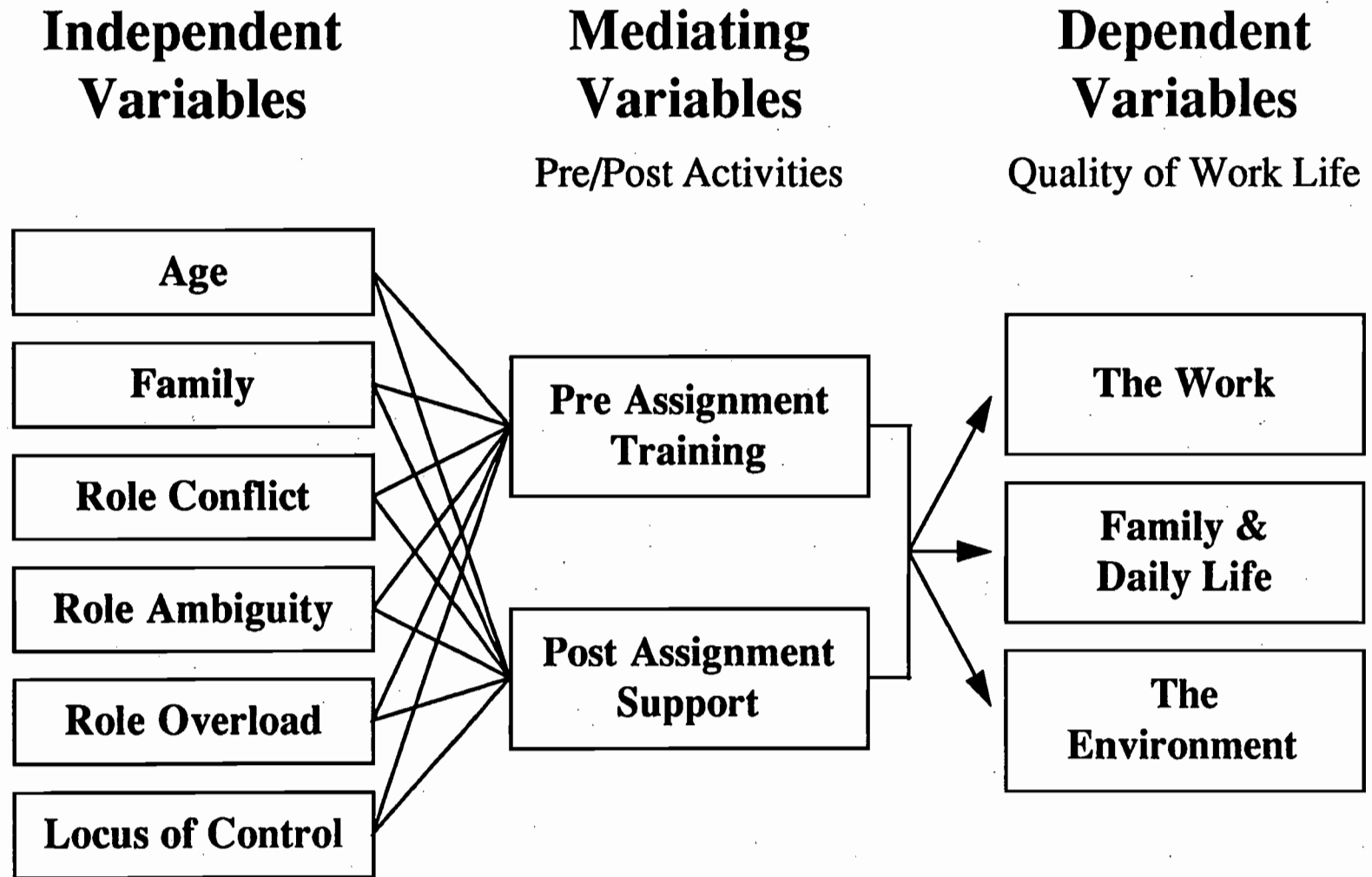
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**Figure 1: The Relationship Between Individual/
Job Characteristics and QWL**

Table 1
Results of Factor Analysis of Quality of Work Life

Items	Factors		
	<i>the work</i>	<i>the environment</i>	<i>family & daily life</i>
Communicate with employees	.67	.12	.04
Work environment	.64	.28	-.12
Communicate with coworker	.63	.01	-.03
Effective leadership	.62	.09	.07
Motivate employees	.60	.30	.01
Glad to take assignment	.59	.04	-.07
Communicate with boss	.58	.01	-.26
Hate to work	.51	.16	.24
Motivation of work	.46	.22	-.01
Feel comfortable	.44	-.23	.03
Conflict with employees	.43	.40	.04
Glad to accept commands	.40	-.02	.05
Skill learning	.37	.35	-.09
Willingly work	.35	.32	-.20
Managerial difficult	-.21	.82	-.01
Government relationship	-.26	.76	.08
Transportation	-.05	.74	.15
General information	.11	.59	.11
Climate	.14	.58	.03
Health condition	.17	.53	.09
Leisure	.38	.47	-.03
Health service	.38	.47	.14
Food	.17	.38	-.31
Interaction with people	.31	.37	-.21
Lifestyle	.11	.27	.67
Homesick	.09	.36	.61
Clothing	.43	.17	.58
Shopping	.10	.12	.52
Life environment	.35	-.06	.51
Family problems *	.30	.14	.49
Spouse's problems *	.27	.12	.44
Children's problems *	.10	.13	.43
Eigenvalue	5.47	4.56	2.38
Percentage of variance explained	17%	14%	7%
Total variance explained	17%	31%	38%

* Items were reverse-coded

Table 2
Summary Statistics

Variables	Mean	s.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Dependent variable: QWL														
1. <i>the work</i>	3.40	0.53												
2. <i>family & daily life</i>	2.62	0.63	.53											
3. <i>the environment</i>	2.96	0.42	.61	.48										
Explanatory variables														
4. <i>age</i>	2.93	1.18	-.02	.06	.01									
5. <i>family</i>	4.12	0.68	.09	.04	.07	.19								
6. <i>role conflict</i>	2.67	0.73	-.62	-.40	-.48	-.04	-.07							
7. <i>role ambiguity</i>	2.64	0.70	-.57	-.33	.45	-.02	-.14	.73						
8. <i>role overload</i>	2.59	0.78	-.60	-.35	-.36	-.01	.01	.50	.50					
9. <i>locus of control</i>	2.50	0.61	-.44	-.26	.32	-.08	-.10	.43	.36	.35				
Mediating variables														
10. <i>post-assign support</i>	3.06	0.49	.74	.69	.65	.11	.07	-.52	-.48	-.48	-.36			
11. <i>pre-assign training</i>	2.73	0.43	.69	.41	.66	.01	.06	-.54	-.48	-.37	-.35	.65		
Control variables														
12. <i>time of assignment</i>	1.84	0.89	.03	-.05	.02	-.01	-.27	.08	.07	-.02	.05	-.27	.01	
13. <i>type of assignment</i>	1.51	0.50	-.05	-.15	-.01	.15	-.21	.13	-.10	.07	.04	-.37	-.05	.15

($r > .15$, $p < .05$)

Table 3
Results of Regression Analysis Prediction of QWL--the work

Variables	Including Controls	Including IVs	<u>Including</u> Pre-Assignment Training	<u>Mediators</u> Post-Assignment Support
Control Variables				
Type of Assignment	.02	.05	.02	.05
Time of Assignment	-.07	.00	.01	.05
Independent Variables				
Age		-.02	-.01	-.04*
Family		.07*	.06	.05
Role conflict		-.23**	-.11*	-.15**
Role ambiguity		-.09	-.05	-.04
Role overload		-.22***	-.19***	-.14***
Locus of control		-.14**	-.08*	-.09*
Mediating Variables				
Pre-assign training			.53***	
Post-assign support				.52***
R square	.005	.560	.675	.712
Δ R square	-----	.555	.115	.152
n	199	199	199	199

+ p<.05, ++ p<.01, +++ p<.001 (two-tail)

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001 (one-tail)

Table 4
Results of Regression Analysis Prediction of QWL--*family & daily life*

Variables	Including Controls	Including IVs	Including Pre-Assignment Training	Mediators Post-Assignment Support
Control Variables				
Type of Assignment	.00	.03	.005	.04
Time of Assignment	-.01	.04	.040	.05
Independent Variables				
Age		.00	.01	-.007
Family		.05	.02	.02
Role conflict		-.16**	-.04	-.09*
Role ambiguity		-.10*	-.05	-.05
Role overload		-.05	-.03	-.01
Locus of control		.07	-.01	-.02
Mediating Variables				
Pre-assign training			.57***	
Post-assign support				.45***
R square	.005	.300	.511	.486
Δ R square	----	.295	.211	.186
n	199	199	199	199

+ p<.05, ++ p<.01, +++ p<.001 (two-tail)

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001 (one-tail)

Table 5
Results of Regression Analysis Prediction of QWL--the environment

Variables	Including Controls	Including IVs	<u>Including</u> Pre-Assignment Training	<u>Mediators</u> Post-Assignment Support
Control Variables				
Type of Assignment	-.02	.00	-.01	.01
Time of Assignment	-.19+	-.14	-.13	-.05
Independent Variables				
Age		.03	.03	.005
Family		.03	.01	-.002
Role conflict		-.22*	-.14	-.09
Role ambiguity		-.01	.02	.08
Role overload		-.13*	-.11*	.001
Locus of control		-.11	-.07	-.023
Mediating Variables				
Pre-assign training			.38**	
Post-assign support				.87***
R square	.030	.220	.259	.502
Δ R square	-----	.190	.039	.182
n	199	199	199	199

+ p<.05, ++ p<.01, +++ p<.001 (two-tail)

* p<.05, ** p<.01, *** p<.001 (one-tail)

APPENDIX 1

EXPLANATORY VARIABLES

Age

Indicate your age level.

Family Responsibility

Indicate the level of family responsibility you have.

Role Conflict

The demands of the home and local company make my decisions difficult.
The different demands from my supervisor and my employees make my decisions difficult.
The home company always gives me conflicting directions.
My opinions always differ from those of the company's management.

Role Overload

I am very busy because my employees cannot do their jobs well.
I cannot finish my work every day because I am too overloaded.
I cannot handle my present job because it is beyond my ability.

Role Ambiguity

I am often confused as to whether my position should be that followed by the home or the local company.
It is difficult for me to follow directions from the company because they are always inconsistent.
I cannot completely understand the company's expectations for my job.

Locus of Control

Internal versus External Control of Reinforcement Scale (Rotter, 1966)

MEDIATING VARIABLES

Pre-assignment Training

The company provided sufficient valuable training about my work assignment.
The company provided sufficient valuable training about the foreign environment.

Post-assignment Support

The company provides periodicals from the home country to the expatriate.
The company routinely sends managers from the home country to visit the expatriate.
The company gives the expatriate a lot of flexibility in managing the foreign operation.
The expatriate is required to report to the home company at fixed intervals.
The home country company is not involved in the day to day management process.

CONTROL VARIABLES

Time of Assignment

Indicate the level of experience you have in your current assignment.

Type of Assignment

Indicate the degree to which other home country expatriates are present at your work site.

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